DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 181 492 CS 205 392

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TITLE On the Need for Organizational Identity--Advanced Composition: A Survey.
INSTITUTION Southeast Missouri State Univ., Cape Girardeau.
PUB DATE Apr 79
NOTE 15p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Conference on College Composition and Communication (30th, Minneapolis, MN, April 5-7, 1979)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Composition (Literary); *Course Descriptions; *Curriculum Research; Educational Research; Higher Education; School Surveys; *Surveys; *Teacher Attitudes

ABSTRACT

The guidelines formulated by participants in invitational workshops at the 1966 and 1967 College Composition and Communication Conferences (CCCC) were used as the basis for the nationwide survey of 374 college teachers of advanced composition courses described in this paper. The paper outlines each of the guidelines' six topic entries (definition of the course, variety and focus, humane emphasis, course content, qualifications of instructors, and modes of instruction), discusses the teacher responses to questionnaire items based on those topics, and relates how the responses reveal current teacher practices in advanced writing courses and their attitudes toward those courses. The following results of the survey are discussed: course emphasis is largely traditional and repetitive of work assigned in freshman composition courses, a definition listing specific course objectives is needed for the advanced composition course, requiring literature majors to take a course in advanced composition is as vehemently opposed as supported by the respondents, and the CCCC guidelines need to be revised to reflect current practices and attitudes of those who teach advanced writing courses. (AEA)

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ON THE NEED FOR ORGANIZATIONAL IDENTITY—ADVANCED COMPOSITION: A SURVEY[1]

Michael Phinney Hogan

Although advanced composition courses are offered by most colleges and universities (and even some junior/community colleges[2]), very few articles in the professional journals have been addressed to the issues of theory and pedagogy for these courses. Only in the Guidelines formulated by participants in Invitational Workshops at the 1966 and 1967 College Composition and Communication Conferences has there been a concerted effort to examine how college instructors might design and teach advanced composition courses.[3] Because these Guidelines attempt to set forth a definition for advanced composition, the only one readily available, I used them as the basis for a nation-wide survey in the 1979 spring term to determine what characterizes the teaching of advanced composition courses. The 374 teachers who returned the 21-item questionnaire represent 311 schools.[4] The results show considerable support for the Guidelines and an equal amount of disagreement.

Of the 374 respondents, 29.7% endorsed the Guidelines, 28.9% criticized one or more topics, and 41.4% made no response to the Guidelines portion of survey. The 1967 Guidelines consisted of six topic entries: 1) Definition of the Course, 2) Variety and Focus, 3) Humane Emphasis, 4) Course Content, Qualifications of Instructors, and 6) Modes of Instruction. I will outline (quoting where possible) each of these topics, discuss the response to them, and relate the relevant questionnaire items to each to reveal current practices in and/or attitudes toward advanced writing courses.

1. Definition: Advanced composition courses should be "open only to students who have at least passed the freshman course at the same college or who have demonstrated equivalent ability." Such courses "should represent substantial progress beyond the goal of the local freshman course."

An incisive response to this definition is that it gives a prerequisite

and an alternative but not a definition. Another is that students themselves progress but courses themselves cannot "represent" progress. Thus, how we distinguish advanced writing courses from the freshman course remains unresolved. Many respondents found advanced composition a difficult rubric to respond to because so many courses fall into that category or heading. Indeed, one respondent proposed abolishing the term. For the 311 institutions represented in the survey, respondents listed 50 different types of courses under the heading of advanced composition. These courses classify generally as follows: advanced composition/exposition; intermediate composition; genre and techniques of writing; stylistics; research; argument; criticism; teaching composition, theory and practice; creative writing; journalism; technical and professional writing; and business writing.

Regarding prerequisites, several respondents stated that the simple testing out or completion of freshman composition is not enough to qualify students for advanced composition courses. Some schools attempt to ensure qualification by requiring one of the following: freshman composition and literature, 10.2%; literature only, less than 1.0%; freshman composition and standing above the freshman year, 7.0%; senior college standing and instructor permission, less than 1.0%; Nevertheless, the majority do require only freshman composition, 54.9%, or its equivalent, 2.8%. Only 5.7% have no prerequisites, accepting students with whatever writing ability they have.[5]

2. Variety and Focus: "In its general form the advanced course may be viewed as covering the range of the freshman course but in greater depth," with emphasis on "alternative strategies in solving writing problems" and analysis of "the reasons for choosing among verbal forms and theories of rhetoric." Specialized courses "isolate certain kinds of writing problems for intensive examination." Specific course descriptions may be determined by types of writing (forms); writing situations and content; students' goals; modes; or specific problems relating to special problems such as "theories of style or history of English prose style."

In distinguishing general courses from specific courses, the 1967 Workshop

participants recognized that the varieties would depend upon the size of the school, its budget, and its students' needs. Limited size, however, does not preclude variety. In the 130 schools with a population under 2500, respondents noted 20 types of specialized courses. A few respondents did note that the examples given in Guideline 2 for special problems are "irrelevant except for graduate students and their programs."

Representative responses to Guideline 2 suggest that a definition should concentrate on rhetorical matters. In support of Aristotelian rhetoric, some respondents noted that we should concentrate on professional writing or writing external to the classroom, a reader-centered emphasis. Conversely, others plead for more emphasis on Platonic rhetorical strategies and less on Aristotelian; thus, the emphasis would be writer-centered, the conceptualization of the thought and the inherent truth of the idea being primary. Yet another respondent vented frustration with theories of rhetoric as pedagogical tools, saying they are as difficult to use in improving writing as are systems of grammar.

The orientation and the types of assignments noted by the respondents reveal much about the focus of instruction.

A rhetorical emphasis does dominate the course orientation, 67.9% of the respondents checking this item. In describing what is involved in this emphasis, they broke it down into the following categories: Aristotelian/ classical rhetoric (66 citations); new rhetorical theory (21); both (5); forms and structures (58); modes (33); stylistics (22); service to the professional needs of the students (17); and problem-solving (3). Only 6.1% of the respondents checked the subject matter item for their course orientation, describing subject matter as ideas (9), thematic issues in fiction (2), or the subject matter in the students' majors (12). Other orientations were noted by 14.4% of the respondents: eclectic approaches (9); process orientation (20);

McCrorie's free-writing (7); workshops (11); and creative writing (7).

The predominance of certain assignments may indicate that many instructors view their advanced courses as extensions of the freshman course, but the variety indicates efforts to reach beyond its limitations. Respondents listed no fewer than 25 types:

Types	Frequency		
analyses	202	evaluative essays	15
personal essays	195	summaries	14
reports	145	exploratory essays	13
research papers	145	journals/diaries	12
articles	132	autobiographies	10
reviews	129	student choice	9
expository essays	71	definitions	7
argument	47	personal narratives	4
descriptive essays	43	classification essays	4
narrative essays	37	interviews	4
correspondence	33	style	3
criticism	27	investigative reports	1
persuasive essays	22		

Perhaps the types of assignments are determined in large part by the texts used by the instructors. The titles of the rhetorics, handbooks, and readers listed by the respondents are far too numerous to list here, but most are those one would find being used in freshman courses. Indeed, one respondent expressed dismay that texts used in freshman composition in her school are used elsewhere in advanced composition courses. Except for highly specialized courses such as business, technical, and professional writing and stylistics, few texts on the market seem to focus on the general advanced writing course. The reason for this sparsity may lie in the lack of a working definition for general writing courses beyond the freshman level. Necessarily, the majority of the instructors, in using "freshman" texts, must rely on their own resources to make the course one of "advanced" focus and status.

The respondents were asked to list their texts according to type. The five most frequently cited texts in each category are listed below in order of frequency:

Rhetorics (123 listed)

Classical Rhetoric for the Modern Student (Corbett)
Style (Eastman)
Rhetoric: Discovery and Change (Young, Becker, and Pike)
Writing Well (Hall)
The New Strategy of Style (Weathers and Winchester)

Handbooks (34 listed)

Elements of Style (Strunk and White)
Harbrace College Handbook
Index to English (Perrin and Ebbitt)
Random House Handbook
The Little English Handbook (Corbett)

Readers (82 listed)

The Norton Reader
Prose Models (Levin)
Reading for Rhetoric (Shrodes, Josephson, and Wilson)
Speaking of Words (McKillop and Cross)
Twenty Questions for the Writer (Berke)

Whether the English major or minor and the English education major are required to take an advanced writing course may reveal something of the focus for the course, but especially departmental attitudes. For these majors and minor, 27.6% of the schools do not require the course; 48.3% require it of the English major; 52.9% require it of the English education major; and 27.9% require it of the English minor.

The most common explanations for not requiring an advanced writing course of the English major are that the majors acquire the necessary skills in their literature courses or that the course has low prestige for the English major. But nearly an equal number of respondents lamented the literature majors' writing skills. A few respondents gave departmental politics as the reason. That some departments view writing as separate from their literature programs is seen in their offering a writing major and thus not requiring writing courses of their English majors. Such programs are not confined to the large institutions; eight respondents representing schools at all levels of enrollment mentioned having a writing major separate from their literature programs.

Respondents were asked to list the types of majors (excluding English majors) electing the course. Responses pertaining to specific courses such as technical and business writing were excluded from the following data:

Major	Frequency	Major	Frequency
Science	84	Psychology	20
Business	78	Art	13
History	53	Economics	13
Sociology	48	Languages	13
Journalism	47	Engineering	10
Political Science	38	Religion	10
Pre-law	38	Physical Education	10

The following majors all received fewer than ten citations: home economics, mathematics, industrial arts, music, education, management, and agriculture.

3. Humane Emphasis: "Crafts must be mastered, but the goal is understanding how the uses of language define human beings."

Respondents clearly divided on this Guideline. Those endorsing it asked that it be stressed more heavily; those opposing it asked that it be deleted. No item on the questionnaire addressed this Guideline, though the question of whether the orientation is primarily toward rhetoric or subject matter touched on the issue. One difficulty lies in the dichotomy of goals in Guideline 3, rather than their fusion. Certainly, the crafts to be mastered and the goal of understanding how language "defines" humans could both be addressed under the umbrella of rhetoric.

Another difficulty is the word humane. As one respondent noted, "humane should mean 'of or pertaining to the humanities,'" expressing the view of several respondents that such emphasis would not reflect their schools' technical, business, legal writing and journalism courses. To this point, a respondent suggested the addition of a scientific emphasis: the use of language to express one's scientific (e.g., chemistry, biology, engineering) perception of reality. Others protested that they could be no more concerned about humane goals in this course than in any other, or that they simply have too

much else to accomplish or include to make this emphasis the major goal of the course. Confused about what "humane emphasis" means, respondents found the statement vague and reflective of the times in which it was written, the 1960's.

In understanding the Guideline to mean that defining human beings through language must begin with the writer, one respondent suggested that it be modified to stress that writers use their own written language to understand themselves. Though such an emphasis may not reflect an Aristotelian view of rhetoric, it may fit in quite nicely with the Platonic emphasis on the importance of the conceptualization of ideas.

Perhaps most significantly, one respondent noted that Guidelines 3 and 4 conflict in specifying the goal for advanced writing courses.

> 4. Course Content: "The primary content of any advanced course is writing itself. For that reason the insights of modern studies of language, rhetoric, and psychology should be made explicit."

The apparent intent of this Guideline was to fuse writing and theory. However, some respondents criticized the Guideline as too broad and vague. They also took exception to the suggestion that modern studies of psychology could be explicitly applied to writing in such courses. But others suggested placing even more emphasis on the importance of linguistics and psycholinguistics to writing. But warning that composition specialists should beware of pontificating on hobby horses rather than dealing with students' writing, one respondent pointed up the danger in letting side issues become the main focus of the course.

Again, a rather strong statement was made for Platonic rhetoric by one respondent, asserting that the course content should consist of the "formal university essay of ideas." The purpose is humanistic and liberal in the broadest sense of education. Yet another respondent suggested combining the concern for ideas and the writing itself by emphasizing the relationship

between content and style so that the stylistic techniques would emphasize and enhance the ideas.

The formulators of the 1967 Guidelines viewed the course content as deriving from two primary sources: the topics of the students' papers and the "subject" of the writing course; but they provided no information on what the subject of the course might be beyond the professional content of specialized writing courses. The survey item on course objectives may provide some insight as to what that course content might be and the relative importance respondents attach to each area. Respondents checked five suggested objectives, favoring them in the following order:

Course Objective	Frequency
Develop mature writing style	325
Develop awareness of audience	297
Teach expository forms	234
Teach modes	180
Improve skill in punctuation, grammar, and mechanics	122

In space provided, respondents listed other objectives:

Course Objective	Frequency	Course Objective	Frequency
Rhetoric	25	Writing as process	5
Revision and editing	16	Writing for publication	5
Invention	11	Logic	4
Developing awareness of thought and language relationships in writing. Perceiving writing as the discovery of what we know.	11	Helping students overcome fear of writing	4
Organization	10	Career writing	2
Research techniques	7	Developing theories of composition	1
Self-discovery	7	Appreciating non-fiction prose	1
Analytical skills	6	Accumulating a portfolio of an assigned number of pages	1
Sentence combining	6		

The two primary concerns of these teachers, style and audience, are both rhetorical matters.

5. Qualifications of Instructors: The teachers of advanced composition should have the following: 1) "special qualifications both as teachers and writers"; 2) "more than ordinary success in teaching freshman composition"; 3) a liberal "academic training"; 4) professional interest in teaching writing, demonstrated by participating in professional societies; 5) "a wide range of extra-academic experience, especially in the areas of professional interest of the students."

Given as the minimum, these qualifications were intended to demonstrate that the advanced writing courses should not be taught by "departmental left-overs" but by dedicated teachers as well-trained as those staffing the literature programs. In its field test, the questionnaire had included an item on the training of the respondent for the advanced writing course. In all cases, they cited a literature background and "on-the-job" training in teaching the course. Thus, this item was dropped from the questionnaire. But in the survey, respondents did suggest emphasizing more training in language, rhetoric, graduate courses in writing and composition pedagogy so that new teachers can avoid having to "rediscover the wheel" in theory and practices.

Respondents found the Guideline on instructor qualifications unrealistic. In specific criticism, respondents noted that the "emphasis on a wide range of extra-academic experience is impractical, except for teachers of vocational students. An academic career precludes this emphasis for most of us." Others questioned whether extra-academic activities would produce better teaching and complained that such a qualification would prevent them from teaching advanced writing courses. The other qualifications were not so severely criticized, but each was questioned. Respondents remarked on how little time or inclination they have for their own writing—teaching is a full-time job; they questioned how "more than ordinary success" in teaching freshman composition could be determined; they doubted whether participation in professional societies as a demonstration of interest in teaching writing is an adequate criterion for

any teacher of composition. For an alternative to Guideline 5, one respondent defined an effective teacher as "one who stimulates students to write well-developed and well-organized and interesting papers."

If promotions indicate anything at all about qualifications, the academic ranks listed by the respondents indicate that the advanced writing courses are not taught by "departmental left-overs" as feared by the formulators of the Guidelines. The top three ranks share the advanced writing course nearly equally: Professor--26.7%; Associate Professor--28.0%; Assistant Professor--33.9%; instructors and graduate assistants--8.6%.

As for professional affiliation, fully one-third of the respondents are not members of the College Composition and Communication Conference. But lack of membership in professional societies such as the CCCC may not demonstrate lack of professional interest so much as failure of such organizations to meet the specific needs of the instructor who teaches the general advanced writing course. In both College English and College Composition and Communication journals, over the last 16 years, only five articles specifically address advanced composition under that rubric. Of these articles, one promoted the Henry James novels as the basis for a creative writing course, one by Francis Christensen discussed the training of advanced composition teachers, and the rest addressed writing for publication as the basis for the course.

The involvement of these teachers in their advanced writing courses may be demonstrated by the number of sections they teach. For those on the quarter system, 9.0% of the respondents teach four sections per year, and 2.0% teach eight per year. On the semester system, 26.4% teach two sections per year; 6.9% one section; 8.2% three sections; 5.8% four sections; and 2.4% from five to eight sections.

6. Modes of Instruction: The course should have smaller sections than those in freshman composition to allow more time for reading papers and conferring with the writers. The number of assignments would depend on the course. Students' writing should receive "considerable commentary" but grade evaluation should be de-emphasized.

The general evaluation of this Guideline is that it is a statement on workload--not on modes of instruction. Specific responses concern the question of what constitutes a smaller section and whether smaller class size is relevant "because advanced composition students are more mature than freshmen" and should require less shepherding. The recommendation pertaining to grade evaluation evoked strong criticism, respondents defending grades because "Students expect to be graded"; "They demand it"; "They work harder when graded"; and "Commentary alone leaves students unclear about their achievements."

In general class size does not appear to be the crucial issue the Guideline implies it to be. The average class size is 17 students. However, ten respondents, representing institutions ranging from under 2500 to 15,000 students, noted that their class sizes range up to thirty students. Perhaps because of larger budgets and greater student demand for the courses, larger institutions are able to offer smaller class sizes.

The average number of assignments is 11 per semester. One respondent stated that he makes no assignments but accepts what the students voluntarily turn in, while another requires 30 assignments, noting that they are short. For those respondents on the quarter system, the number of assignments ranged from a minimum of 1 to a high of 30, the average being 9 per quarter.

The survey data suggest that the actual modes of instruction are largely traditional. The primary mode of instruction is the lecture, according to 41.7% of the respondents. Another 34.2% combine the lectures with individualized instruction, workshops, discussions, conferences, or

peer-editing. Only 9.9% use individualized instruction as the primary mode; and only 9.3% use the workshop, discussion, conference, or seminar as the primary mode.

SUMMARY

Although one respondent lamented the displacement of rhetoric as the focus of advanced composition courses, the survey shows that "traditional" rhetoric still provides the foundation for the majority of the courses as indicated in the objectives, the assignments, and the texts used (Corbett's Classical Rhetoric for the Modern Student dominated the other texts named by respondents). However, the increasing concern for invention has apparently given rise to calls for inclusion of Platonic rhetorical concerns in conceptualization of ideas.

Emphases in the courses appear to be largely traditional and, to a degree, repetitive of those things we do in freshman composition. This point is particularly evident in the predominance of the research paper assignment. A fundamental issue is whether it should play such a major role in the advanced course: are students learning skills in invention, analysis, and synthesis in writing such papers in the advanced course that they have not already acquired in the freshman course (if the research paper was taught there) and their own major courses? Obviously more research and discussion are needed to examine this issue. Nevertheless, the point about the research paper illustrates the difficulties in defining the advanced writing courses and distinguishing them from the freshman courses with regard to focus, course content, and modes of instruction.

A definition for the general courses is needed. The specialized courses such as technical writing, creative writing, business writing, and stylistics appear to be well-defined regarding subject, audience, and purpose,

as shown by the texts written specifically for the students interested in these areas. But few texts give new teachers and students directions in the general advanced composition courses; some of the respondents, new to the teaching of advanced composition, asked for suggestions about what they might do in designing their courses. Perhaps without a functional definition, the texts are not forthcoming.

A second concern is the course requirement for English majors. Whether the literature major is sufficient for preparing students to write and to teach writing is a troubling questions. The issue of requiring literature majors to take a course in advanced composition was as vehemently opposed as supported by the respondents in this survey. Such polarization indicates the need for discussion.

Much has changed since the Guidelines were issued in 1967. Pedagogical views, goals, and practices in composition have changed. The body of theory for composition has expanded. What is surprising is that amid the great controversy and discussions about freshman composition so little has been said about advanced courses. The 1967 Guidelines provide foundation for discussion of our goals in the advanced courses, but as the respondents to the survey have shown, they need to be revised. They should be more precise, and they should reflect current practices and the attitudes of those who teach the advanced writing courses.

Notes

[1]The Grants and Research Funding Committee at Southeast Missouri State University provided the funds for this survey, 1979.

[2]Though the survey was intended only for four-year schools, some members of community colleges responded because their names were mixed in with the computerized mailing list purchased from the National Council of Teachers of English.

[3]"Guidelines and Directions for College Courses in Advanced Composition," College Composition and Communication, XVIII (December, 1967), 266-268.

[4]For various reasons such as inappropriate recipients, some returned questionnaires were excluded from this analysis.

[5]Where the percentages do not total 100, the remainder represents no response.